



CASA
Court Appointed Special Advocates
FOR CHILDREN

PIEDMONT CASA

P I E D M O N T C A S A

Annual Report

2008–2009

CHAIR'S MESSAGE



At this fall's Induction Ceremony of new CASA volunteers, Juvenile Court Judge Edward DeJ. Berry spoke of his admiration for Piedmont CASA, noting that Piedmont CASA helped "write the book" on excellence in CASA programs. As I near the end of my six years on Piedmont CASA's governing board, I now understand what Judge Berry means much more completely than I did at the beginning of my tenure.

In "writing" the book under Ruth Stone's exceptional leadership, our chapter of this national organization has developed comprehensive training programs for new volunteers, largely using local resources; has hired a skilled – and dedicated – staff to support the volunteers as they tackle always-challenging cases; and from the beginning has earned the support of the larger community by effectively explaining its mission and the growing need for this work.

"Edits" to the program have come gradually over the

continued on pg. 5

A Gift for CASA

Just after Thanksgiving 1989 a baby girl was born. Ten years later the young girl was entrusted to the Department of Social Services and placed in foster care. A CASA volunteer was assigned. Over the next eight years, the child experienced 11 placements, 18 court hearings, and five social workers. Just before Christmas in 2007, the 18-year-old child became – in the eyes of the law – an adult and left the system behind. Her CASA volunteer, who had remained with her for eight years, was dismissed from the case.

***...having that child
come back into her life,
what a gift!***

On October 14, 2009 a young woman walked up the steps at 100 Court Square to Piedmont CASA and asked to see her CASA volunteer. She wanted to see her CASA worker because, as she put it, the CASA was the only one to "make a difference" and "was always there for me."

At Piedmont CASA we count this story as one of our great successes. Although this child spent years of her life engaged with a system that was unable to meet fully her needs for stability and structure, much less provide her with the kind of love and nurturing we all believe children deserve, she WAS provided a CASA volunteer. The CASA volunteer couldn't act as a mother, a teacher, or even a mentor – but she could be there to listen and report, to gather information and disseminate it, to be ever-present and stable during a time that was primarily marked by upheaval and uncertainty.

Like the young girl who was assigned her CASA Volunteer in December 1999 and who left the system in December 2007, many children find themselves in court, through no fault of their own, during the holidays. This time of year, which is supposed to be full of joy and celebration with



family, can instead be a time of loneliness and sadness for hundreds of local children. At Piedmont CASA we are always aware at this time of year that many of the children we serve are not able to be with their families and loved ones. Instead they are spending the season in foster homes, residential facilities, group homes and sometimes, hospitals. Foster parents, social workers, therapists, group home supervisors and the other caring adults are aware of how hard the holiday season can be for children who are not living at home. Like them, CASA volunteers make special efforts to visit with their CASA children during a time that is supposed to be full of fun and joy, hoping to help ease the pain that marks their lives.

This year, as the holidays approached, the young woman directed her steps toward Piedmont CASA hoping to reconnect with her CASA volunteer. Despite the fact that the CASA volunteer had retired and moved out of state, the connection was made: the former volunteer joyfully reported that the young woman lives successfully on her own, is employed and is taking classes at the local community college. When the former CASA child sought out her volunteer, she was hoping to reestablish a relationship that was a significant part of her youth. In the process she gave the volunteer the knowledge that her eight years of advocacy were significant and meaningful. And having that child come back into her life, what a gift! ■

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Volunteer Activity Highlights:

- Piedmont CASA trained **40 new CASA volunteers**;
- Advocates were assigned to **83 new children** (compared with 70 the previous year);
- Cases were **successfully closed for 68 children**; Of the closed cases, advocates were assigned to their children an average of 19 months;
- **124 independent investigations** were conducted;
- **338 hearings** were attended;
- **7,086 contacts** were made by CASA volunteers with children, parents, physicians, therapists, social workers, attorneys and others;
- **960 monthly monitoring reports** were submitted by CASA volunteers;
- Volunteers with Piedmont CASA contributed **11,389 hours in services** working on behalf of child abuse victims;
- **8 children remained on Piedmont CASA's waiting list** at the end of the year.

Spring Training Starts in March 2010!

Please call Piedmont CASA at (434) 971-7515 or email pcasa@embarqmail.com for an application, or apply on-line at www.pcasa.org.



Director's Message—Investing in Children

past 14 years. When Juvenile Court judges began to assign virtually all of the abuse and neglect cases before them to CASA, the result was often a double-digit waiting list of children for whom there were not available volunteers. CASA responded by stepping up its volunteer recruitment: day and evening training classes have been held in various locations around Charlottesville, so as to be convenient for more applicants, and CASA has successfully applied for grants to support both print and radio advertising, again expanding its reach. These days, over the course of a year, an active roster of about 90 volunteers works on behalf of approximately 200 children, researching and recommending ways for them to live in safe, nurturing and permanent homes.

Opportunities for "revision" continue to arise as CASA seeks to serve better our local children. For example, CASA, along with other local agencies, is doing more to help teenagers in foster care prepare for independent living, necessary when they must leave "the system" at age 18. And Ruth Stone, the consummate – and visionary – collaborator, has led CASA's involvement in the Family Treatment Court, the Foothills Child Advocacy Center, the Charlottesville/Albemarle Commission on Children and Families, and numerous state-wide initiatives.

And so, after six years I leave the board not only with great respect for all that this wonderful organization has accomplished so far, but also with the certainty that it will continue to write, edit and revise as necessary in pursuit of its mission: to speak effectively for local children so long as they are in need.

Louise Dudley, *Chair*

When you send in your gift to Piedmont CASA, do you wonder about the children who will benefit directly from your generosity? They aren't usually on the news and they don't usually make the front page of local newspapers --the child who witnesses violent arguments between his drunken parents; the daughter sexually assaulted by her mother's boyfriend; brothers and sisters living in a home with bugs, animal feces, rotting food and garbage; or the teenage girl who overdosed to escape the pain of her mother's verbal abuse. Sadly, most of the abused and neglected children we serve live quietly under the radar, waiting for someone to step in and make a difference for them. It's only when their circumstances become severe enough or continue long enough that the system can start the process of rescuing them from caregivers who can't or won't take proper care of them.

CASA children live in a hidden world devastated by family secrets. CASA volunteers are assigned to the most serious cases requiring court intervention. Volunteer advocates get to know the children and their situations, independently investigating the circumstances that brought them to court. These efforts culminate with written recommendations to our local judges as to what services and outcomes are in the children's best interests.

Last year, our volunteers helped locate relatives; they ensured the enrollment of children in after school activities; they advocated for siblings to stay together in foster care; they helped assure appropriate medical treatment for asthma, a bacterial infection and dental needs; they notified social services of the presence of a registered sex offender in a child's home; they helped arrange therapy for grief, loss

and anger following separation from family; they pinpointed the need for counseling in response to stress; and they facilitated proper school placement.

The CASA volunteers' efforts to remain a positive force of continuity and advocacy are unmatched, and they are bound only by the time they have to give. **The need for their service cannot be overstated. Virginia ranks 46th out of the 50 states on spending to protect children –only \$37.24 per child.**¹ Our volunteers donate, on average, \$1,000 worth of their time, to each CASA child.²

When you send in your gift to Piedmont CASA, 89 cents of every dollar goes directly to the program services for children. Piedmont CASA volunteers make a difference for the children they serve, and because of your help we are able to assign more volunteers to more children. We, and these local children, say thank you. ■

Ruth L. Stone

¹ *We Can Do Better, Child Abuse and Neglect Deaths In America*, Every Child Matters Education Fund, Washington, D.C.

² Virginia Office on Volunteerism Value of Volunteer Time

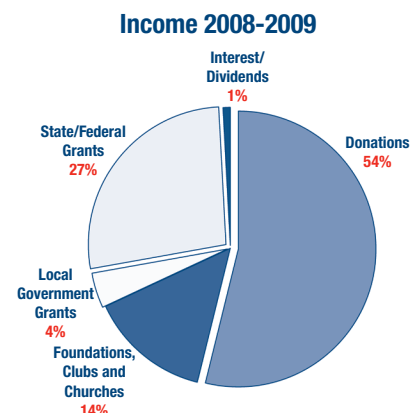
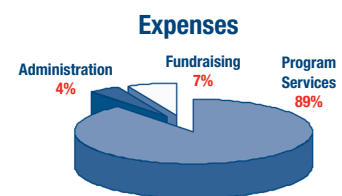
Financial Summary: July 1, 2008–June 30, 2009

Expenses:

Program Services	\$504,540.00
Administration	\$ 25,201.00
Fundraising	<u>\$ 37,092.00</u>
	\$566,833.00

Income:

Donations	\$238,664.00
Foundations, Clubs & Churches	\$ 62,745.00
Local Government Grants	\$ 17,850.00
State/Federal Grants	\$119,458.00
Other	<u>\$ 3,851.00</u>
	\$442,568.00



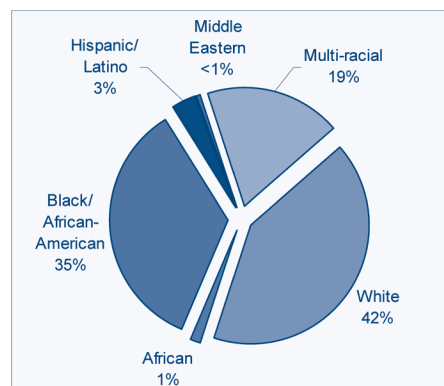
The Children We Serve

Last year 103 CASA volunteers served 210 child victims, a 12% increase over FY 08. Of the 210 children ages birth to 18, 90 were girls and 120 were boys, a 27% increase in the number of boys. Three children were African; 73 Black/African American; seven Hispanic/Latino; one Middle Eastern; 39 multi-racial; and 87 White.

CASA Makes a Difference

Piedmont CASA tracks the well-being of children served by the volunteers. Of the 68 children whose cases were closed last year:

- 100% of children remained free from new incidents of abuse or neglect;
- 92% of children with health needs received the medical care they needed;
- 100% of children with mental health concerns benefited from improvement in emotional well-being and/or received appropriate therapeutic services;
- 100% of school age children with educational concerns demonstrated grade-level academic performance, or received remedial services; and
- 100% of the children served by the program remained free from new “founded” incidents of abuse and/or neglect.



CASA VOLUNTEERS ARE ORDINARY PEOPLE WHO DO EXTRAORDINARY THINGS FOR CHILDREN.



2008-2009

Annual Report

www.pcasa.org

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